



Lipid-based nanoparticles as novel drug delivery systems for antimicrobial agents

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ABSTRACT

Despite the development of novel drugs and technologies in combating the infectious diseases, they remain as a global health challenge. The use of conventional antimicrobial drugs are always associated with problems such as antimicrobial resistance, adverse effects, and inefficient drug delivery. In this regard, the unique physiochemical properties of the nanoparticles have led to increase in the researches on nanoparticles and their application as promising antimicrobial products. Lipid nanoparticles (LNPs) are new carrier systems developed as an alternative to traditional nanoparticle vehicles. The solid lipid nanoparticles (SLN), nanostructured lipid carriers (NLCs), lipid-drug conjugates (LDCs), Lipid-core nanocapsules (LNCs) and lipid-polymer nanoparticles (LPNs) are carriers with a lipid matrix showing advantages for different applications due to the use of biodegradable, and biocompatible lipids. LNPs have exclusive properties owing to their ultra-small size and high surface area, thereby, they are able to enhance the penetration of antimicrobial agents into different body parts, which increase targeting, treatment efficiency and reduce the toxicity of drugs. LNPs are often used as sustained release systems due to their slow release properties, and they also used for improving drug absorption and bioavailability. It has been found that the composition and structure of LNPs are two critical factors that may influence their pharmaceutical performance in different body organs. This review focuses on the development of LNP systems for antimicrobial drugs delivery and gives an overview on the modern LNP- based therapeutic strategies against the infections. The mechanism of action and advantages of these nanoparticles as antibacterial, antifungal, antiviral and anti-parasitic agents are highlighted in this review.

Keywords

lipid nanoparticles; drug delivery; carrier systems; antimicrobial agents; infectious diseases

Abbreviations

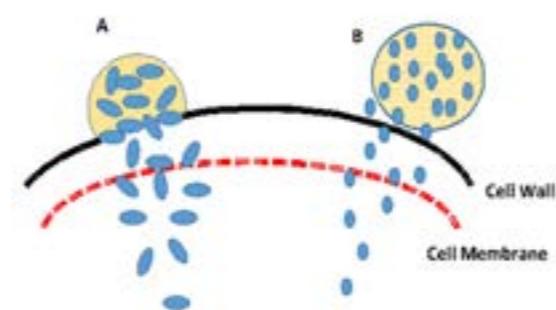
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Introduction

An antimicrobial refers to agents that kills or inhibits microorganisms by interfering with their growth [1]. Conventional antimicrobial therapy consists of using chemotherapeutic agents or antibiotics to treat the infectious diseases [2]. With the commercial production of the first antibiotic penicillin in the late 1940s, use of the antimicrobial agents to treat the infectious diseases ranging from the topical ointments to intravenously injected solutions [3]. Infectious diseases, whether intracellular, extracellular, or biofilm-mediated infections, have always been a global problem causing millions of deaths each year [2].

Antimicrobial agents do suffer from a range of limitations, like narrow spectrum activity, problem regarding the safety and tolerability, side effects and toxicity, and allergic reaction. Inefficient delivery of the drugs one of the major limitations of conventional antimicrobial therapy [2]. Another major limitation of antimicrobial therapy is the development of bacterial resistance to these agents by using different mechanisms and some organisms are so reluctant that they can only be treated with the experimental and potentially toxic drugs [4]. Also, intracellular infections remain difficult to treat because of the low antimicrobial activity inside the cells due to their difficult transport through the cell membranes [1, 5]. Moreover, the treatment of chronically infected conditions such as cystic fibrosis (CF) disease is another challenge in antimicrobial therapy because treating such conditions necessitates frequent intravenous administrations of high-dose antibiotics [4, 6].

One of the promising efforts to address this challenging and dynamic pattern of infectious diseases is the use of nanotechnology [2]. Because of their very small size, nanoparticles have much greater biological access, so they are more likely than larger particles to enter cells, tissues and organs [5]. Nanoparticles (NPs) are particulate dispersions, or solid particles with a size range of 10-1000 nm [2]. NPs usually have unique physicochemical, and biological properties which can be designed for wanted applications [7]. Rapid advances in the NPs production with uniform size, shape and composition have caused a revolution in the pharmaceutical sciences. These properties can be used to overcome some of the limitations of conventional antimicrobial agents and used as vehicles to carry these therapeutic agents [5, 8, 9]. The NPs drug delivery systems can improve the quality of antimicrobial therapy by decreasing their side effects, reducing the frequency of drug administration via prolongation of drug residence time, controllable uniform distribution in the target tissue, improved solubility, sustained and controlled release, enhanced cellular internalization (Figure 1) [4,10].

Figure 1.

Cellular internalization of antimicrobial drug-lipid nanoparticles to microorganisms: (a) nanoparticles fuse with microbial cell wall or membrane and release the carried drugs; (b) nanoparticles bind to cell wall and serve as a drug depot to continuously release drug molecules. Redrawn from reference [1].

Table 1

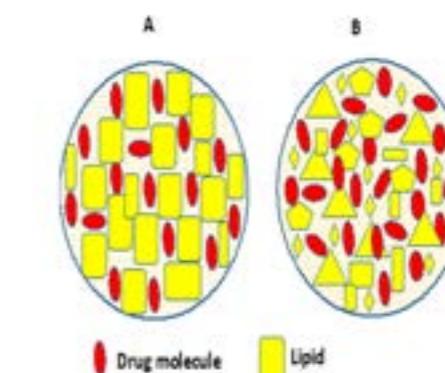
Summary of lipid-based nanoparticle characteristics including solid lipid nanoparticles (SLN), nanostructured lipid carriers (NLCs), lipid-drug conjugates (LDCs), Lipid-core nanocapsules (LNCs) and lipid-polymer hybrid nanoparticles (LPNs).

Lipid carrier	lipid composition	Structure & Assembly	Properties	Ref.
SLN	Solid lipids: Pure triglycerides, glyceride mixtures, waxes (primarily saturated fatty acid chains)	Nanosphere: Solid lipid with a surfactant coating	Hydrophobic in nature; used for different routes of administration; burst release more common; lower drug loading for hydrophilic compounds	[82]
NLC	Solid lipids and liquid lipids(oils): Pure triglycerides, glyceride mixtures, with saturated and unsaturated fatty acid chains, waxes	Nanosphere: Blend of solid and liquid lipid phases with a surfactant coating	As 2nd-generation SLNs: Better control of drug release, higher drug loading capacity	[82]
LNCs	A dispersion of lipids (medium chain triglycerides and fatty acids) with different surfactant/ co-surfactants	Nanocapsule: Lipid core with polymeric shell	High capacity of lipid core for drug loading with protective envelope; more sustained drug release	[11, 18, 64]
LDCs	Fatty acids/phospholipids conjugated to the drug molecule	Nanosphere	Drug bind to lipids, Enhance lipophilicity of hydrophilic drugs and cell membrane penetration	[12, 14, 83]
LPNs	Phospholipids	Nanocapsule: Polymer core with Lipid coat	Physical core stability due to polymer matrix; Promising anti-biofilm activity	[6, 20]

Types of NPs**Solid lipid nanoparticles (SLNs)**

SLNs are LNPs were developed at the beginning of the 1990s as an alternative novel carrier system to liposomes, and polymeric nanoparticles. They are produced by replacing the liquid lipid of an emulsion by a solid lipid. The lipid particle matrix being solid at both room and body temperature. SLNs offer unique properties such as smaller size range 50-1000 nm, larger surface area and these are attractive for their ability to improve performance of pharmaceuticals. They are primarily composed of solid lipids from either physiological lipids or lipids with generally regarded as safe status, SLNs possess a solid lipid core matrix that can solubilize lipophilic molecules, and this core is stabilized by surfactants [14, 15]. SLNs have potentially wide applications including parenteral delivery, ocular delivery, rectal delivery, oral delivery, topical delivery and vaccine delivery systems by improving bioavailability and controlled release characteristics [12]. In addition, SLNs can be used as an antimicrobial drug delivery platform, Table 2 [2]. However, the development of SLNs is impeded by some barriers. The most

significant one is its low drug loading capacity for hydrophilic drugs. Secondly, burst release is more common for SLNs due to their open metrical structure, Figure 2-a [15].

**Figure 2.**

Structure of solid lipid nanoparticle (a) and nanostructured lipid carrier (b). Redrawn from reference [17].

Table 2.
Properties of some of the solid lipid nanoparticles (SLNs) studied as drug delivery for antimicrobial drugs.

Drug (Year)	Size (nm)	Lipid composition	Surfactant/ cosurfactant	(EE) (%)	Application/ Study	Ref.
Econazole (2007)	139 ± 12.7	Glyceropalmito-stearate	Tween 80	97-102	Topical In vivo (human) & in vitro (pig ear skin)	[33]
Ciprofloxacin (2008)	73-98	Stearic acid	Phosphatidyl-choline/ Sodium taurocholate	37.8 ± 2.38	In vitro release	[80]
Oflloxacin (2011)	156 ± 7.5	Palmitic acid	Poly vinyl Alcohol	41.4 ± 1.5	Oral In vitro & in vivo (mice): PK, PD	[48]
Amikacin (2013)	164 ± 7	Cholesterol	Tween 80	89 ± 6	Pulmonary & IV In vivo (rats)	[40]
Erythromycin (2014)	153 ± 2.3	Glycerylmono-stearate	Poloxamer 188/ soya lecithin	88.4 ± 2.09	In vivo (rats)	[45]
Tilmicosin (2016)	86.3 ± 1.5	Hydrogenated castor oil	Poly vinyl Alcohol	69.1 ± 2.8	Oral vitro & in vivo (chicken)	[64, 65]

Nanostructured lipid carriers (NLCs)

This generation of LNPs consists of mixture of solid and liquid lipids with a special nanostructure. NLCs improve drug loading and firmly incorporate the drug during storage (Figure 2-b). Therefore, the NLCs system minimizes or avoids some potential problems associated with SLNs [12, 14]. NLCs reduce burst release of drug and provide better control of drug release. The highest drug load could be achieved by mixing solid lipids with small amounts of liquid lipids (oils) which are called imperfections in the crystal [12, 16]. NLCs may find extensive application in topical drug delivery, oral and parenteral administration of cosmetic and pharmaceutical active ingredients, Table 3 [14].

Lipid-core nanocapsules (LNCs)

Nanocapsules are vesicular carriers constituted of an oil core surrounded by a polymeric wall [18]. The core acts as a liquid reservoir for several drugs, and the shell as a protective membrane. In particular, lipid nanocapsules, have special use for encapsulating and delivering hydrophobic drugs. Thanks to the drug protection and their controlled release, these kinds of nanoparticles provide an ideal solution for drug delivery, leading to selective toxicity, minimizing the

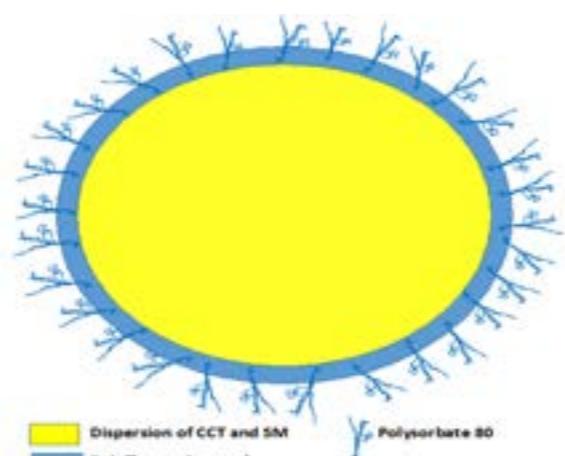


Figure 3.
Illustrative model for lipid-core nanocapsules. Sorbitan monostearate (SM), Caprylic/capric triglyceride (CCT). Redrawn from reference [18].

Table 3.
Properties of some nanostructured lipid carriers (NLCs) studied as antimicrobial drug delivery system.

Drug (Year)	Size (nm)	Lipid composition	Surfactant/ cosurfactant	(EE) (%)	Application/ Study	Ref.
Clotrimazole (2013)	210 ± 2.7	Stearic acid, Oleic acid	Sodium lauryl sulfate, lecithin	94 ± 3.6	In vitro skin permeation (human cadaver)	[33]
Miconazole (2013)	>250	Dynasan® 116, Miglyol® 812	Poloxamer 188	80-98	In vitro skin permeation (rat)	[80]
Terbinafine (2015)	128 ± 4.5	Glyceryl mono-stearate, Labrasol®	Pluronic F-127	63-84	Dermal In vitro & In vivo (rat)	[48]
Tilmicosin (2016)	149 ± 3.0	Compritol® 888 ATO, Sesame oil	Tween 80, Poloxamer 407,	86.3 ± 2.3	Oral In vitro & in vivo (chicken)	[40]

Table 4.
Properties of some Lipid-core nanocapsules (LNCs) studies as chemotherapeutic drug delivery system.

Drug (Year)	Size (nm)	Structure & Composition	Surfactant/ cosurfactant	(EE) (%)	Application/ Study	Ref.
		Shell (polymer)	Core (lipid)			
Clotrimazole (2014)	169 ± 15	Coconut oil	Eudragit® S 100	Tween 80	>99.9	In vitro release & in vitro antifungal activity
Tilmicosin (2016)	85.0 ± 1.0	Coconut oil	Eudragit® S 100	Span 80 Tween 80	94.3 ± 2.0	Oral In vitro release & in vivo (chicken), PK
Praziquantel (2018)	50.8 ± 0.1	Labrafac® Oleic acid	Kolliphor® HS 15	Miltefosine Span 80	99.8 ± 0.8	Oral In vitro & in vivo (mice, rat) PD & PK

Eudragit® S 100: Methacrylic Acid - Methyl Methacrylate Copolymer (1:1)
Labrafac® lipophil WL 1349: Caprylic-capric acid triglycerides
Kolliphor® HS 15: a mixture of free polyethylene glycol and polyethylene glycol (15)-hydroxystearate
Miltefosine: 1-hexadecylphosphocholine
Span 80: Sorbitan mono-oleate

Other lipid nanoparticles delivery systems

Lipid drug conjugates (LDCs)-NPs is a special form of nanoparticles. A major problem of SLNs is the low capacity to load hydrophilic drugs due to partitioning effects during the production process, and only highly potent hydrophilic drugs which are effective in low concentrations can be firmly incorporated in the solid lipid matrix [12, 21]. In order to overcome this limitation, LDCs-NPs with drug loading capacities of up to 33% were developed. Such matrices may have potential application in brain targeting of hydro-

philic drugs in serious protozoan infections, Table 5 [12, 14].

Another kind of lipid nanocapsules, also recently developed, combining the advantages of colloidal particles and lipid delivery systems organized in an internal liquid or semi-liquid oil core, an external lipid layer solid at room temperature and have nearly the same particle size as SLNs, but they have a core-shell structure [8, 22]. Their structure mimics lipoproteins, while have a hybrid structure between polymer nanocapsules and liposomes. These nanocapsules are

Table 5.
Properties of some lipid-drugs conjugate nanoparticles (LDCs) studied as antimicrobial drug delivery systems [83].

Drug conjugate	Lipid used	Possible type of Linkage	Advantages	Ref.
Cephalosporin 1994	Lipidic and glycolipidic amino acids	Lipidic amino acids and peptides conjugation.	Enhanced oral bioavailability. Such conjugation enhances the lipophilicity and oral uptake of drug which intensify the amount of drug in blood and at the site of action.	[75]
Diminazine diaceturate 2002	Stearic acid, Oleic acid	Ionic bond due to protonation of amide bond	High drug loading (33%, wt/wt). It seems that the formulated LDCs avoids the hepatic uptake by plasma protein adsorption pattern. It targets specific site with prolonged drug release. A possibility of increased uptake of diminazene by LDL receptor at the blood-brain barrier.	[76]
Acyclovir 2012	Ricinoleic acid, 12-Hydroxy Stearic acid	Ester	Higher absorption and higher cellular accumulation. Biotinylated lipids of acyclovir possess enhanced affinity towards SMVT. These pro-drugs appear to be potential therapy for oral and ocular herpes virus infections because of higher expression of SMVT on intestinal and corneal epithelial cells.	[77]
Isoniazid (INH) 2012	Phospholipon®100H, Stearic acid and Palmitic acid	Lipopptide	Improved cellular uptake and site-specific delivery of INH. The affinity and penetration of lipopeptide into mycolic acid-containing lipid monolayer was higher compared to phospholipid.	[78]
Rifampicin 2014	Lipoid® S- 75	Hydrogen bonding	Higher aqueous solubility. Enhanced bioavailability	[79]

LDL: low-density lipoprotein

SMVT: sodium-dependent multivitamin transporter

Phospholipon®100H: a hydrogenated soy lecithin

Lipoid® S- 75: Soybean lecithin

Miltefosine: 1-hexadecylphosphocholine

Span 80: Sorbitan mono-oleate

composed of a medium chain triglyceride core of capric and caprylic acids known under the commercial name of Labrafac that is surrounded by a shell composed of lecithin and a surfactant called Solutol® HS, through incorporating hydrophilic and lipophilic surfactants, Figure 4 [23- 25].

Lipid-polymer hybrid nanoparticles (LPNs), where antibiotic-loaded polymeric nanoparticle core is coated with lipid layers (Figure 5), represent a promising anti-biofilm formulation as the hybrid nanoparticles possess physical robustness afforded by the polymer matrix, while at the same time they possess the high biofilm compatibility characteristics of liposomes. The small nanoparticle size enables them to penetrate the sputum mesh, which has an average spacing of 100-400nm, to reach embedded biofilm colonies resulting in higher anti-biofilm efficacy [6, 20].

Applications of LNPs as drug delivery system:

Applications with regard to routes of administration

LNPs as topical delivery system

Topical infections of skin are among the most widespread diseases, therefore, percutaneous therapy is a good choice for the treatment of these pathologies because of self-administration, patient compliance and lower systemic adverse effects which would result into reducing possible toxicity of the drug [27, 28]. Stratum corneum is the main barrier in percutaneous absorption of the topically applied drugs [29].

Many approaches have been used to increase the passage of the poorly skin-partitioned drug molecules through this barrier. One of the interesting features of the LNPs for topical use is related to their proper

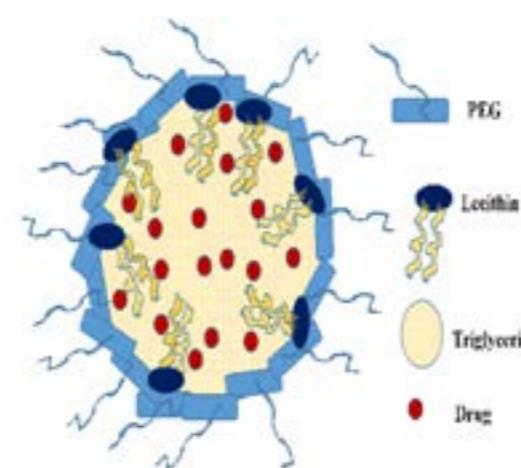


Figure 4.

Schematic representation of lipid nanocapsules. Solutol® HS 15, a mixture of free polyethylene glycol and polyethylene glycol (15)-hydroxystearate (PEG); Labrafac®, Caprylic-capric acid triglycerides (Triglycerides). Redrawn from reference [25].

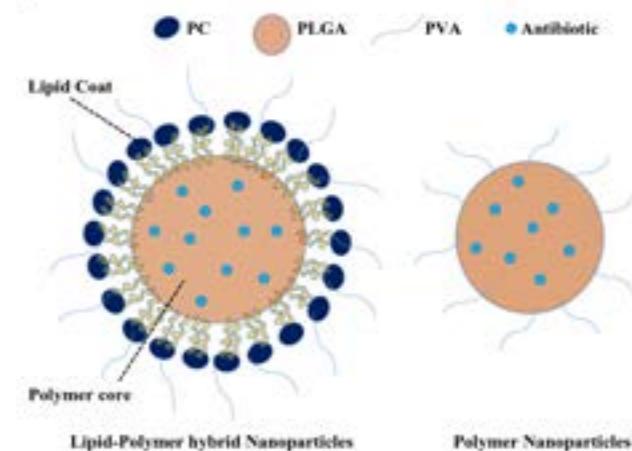


Figure 5.

Drug-loaded lipid-polymer hybrid nanoparticles (LPNs) (PLGA-PVA/PC) and their non-hybrid polymer nanoparticle counterparts (PLGA-PVA), phosphatidylcholine (PC), poly lactic-co-glycolic acid (PLGA), poly vinyl alcohol (PVA). Redrawn from reference [6].

semisolid consistency [30]. The advantages of using LNPs to deliver antimicrobial agents to superficial infections have been well documented [1, 9]. Unique properties of LNPs make them a promising antimicrobial drug delivery platform. Although emulsion has the problem of low viscosity, which results in less retention time, LNPs can be used in the formulations with increased viscosity. Occlusive compounds affect the skin hydration, penetration of compounds into skin and retention of water content of the skin that lead to stratum corneum swelling and better drug permeation. LNPs have small particle size and film forming properties, which make it best for enhancement of bioavailability of the encapsulated material after topical applications, Table 6 [4, 26, 29, 31].

Azole antimycotic drugs are extremely water-insoluble, therefore, it is difficult to deliver these drugs to infected sites [1]. Clotrimazole is used topically in the treatment of vulvo-vaginitis caused by *Candida albicans*. However, this treatment is generally associated with mucosal irritation, and low residence time at the vaginal cavity. Taking all into account, clotrimazole-lipid core nanocapsules with Eudragit (RS100), as a cationic polymer, developed for the vaginal delivery [32].

Sanna et al. (2007) investigated the topical delivery of econazole nitrate using its SLN formulation [33]. In vivo studies demonstrated that SLNs promoted the skin penetration of econazole nitrate and improved drug diffusion into the deeper skin layers after 3 h of application compared to conventional econazole nitrate. In addition, they demonstrated that permeation profiles of econazole nitrate from LNPs were influenced not only by the lipid content but also

by the particle size [34]. Due to poor cutaneous permeability, miconazole nitrate (MN) presents a problem by topical application [30]. In this connection, Bhalekar et al. (2009) and Sanap and Mohanta (2013) studied the MN-SLNs and MN-NLCs. There was increased uptake of miconazole when enclosed in LNPs and used by topical application [30, 35].

Castro et al. (2011) demonstrated that retinoic acid-SLNs reduced the retinoic acid-induced skin irritation in comparison to those of conventional formulations, but without reducing the therapeutic efficiency of retinoic acid [36]. In addition, acitretin, a retinoid widely used for the treatment of psoriasis, a chronic skin disorders in adults, was included in NLCs recently [37].

LNPs as pulmonary delivery system

The use of aminoglycosides can be limited because of their adverse effects and low oral pharmacokinetic properties is due to their polarity. Aminoglycosides are used for the treatment of severe pulmonary infections like cystic fibrosis (CF) [38, 39]. CF is characterized by extremely high viscosity secretions from exocrine glands in the airways. The increased viscosity of mucus leads to a reduced clearance of microorganisms from the respiratory tract and results in chronic bacterial infection of the airways. Amikacin is aminoglycoside that is used for the treatment of CF infections [40].

The distribution of amikacin-SLNs after pulmonary delivery was studied by Videira et al. (2002). Radio-labelled amikacin was loaded in cholesterol solid lipid and after in vitro optimization, the desired SLNs and free drug were administered through pulmonary

Table 6.
Applications and advantages of LNPs as topical antimicrobial drug delivery systems.

Formulation	Drug	Application	Advantage	Ref.
LNCs with Eu-dragit (RS100)	Clotrimazole	* to treat vulvo-vaginitis caused by Candida albicans	* inhibited Candida at lower concentration * internalized more by fungal cells. * increased antifungal efficiency.	[32]
Stearic acid based NLCs	Clotrimazole	* in vitro skin penetration and in vivo skin hydration	* a greater quantity of drug remained localized in the skin with lesser amount penetrating into the target site ex vivo.	[29]
SLNs	Econazole nitrate	* ex vivo drug permeation using porcine skin	* econazole nitrate-SLN with a diameter of 150 nm increased drug diffusion rate into deeper skin layer * increased uptake of miconazole in skin.	[1]
SLNs	Miconazole nitrate	* topical application * ex vivo drug skin permeation	* sustained drug release over 24 h period. * in tape stripping experiments, a 10-fold greater retention of the drug.	[35, 43]
NLCs-based gel	Miconazole nitrate (MN)	* topical application	* MN-NLCs successfully incorporated into hydrogel for topical application * in vitro and skin permeation data provides sustained release of MN.	[30]
Chitosan- SLNs	Retinoic acid	* anti-inflammatory and antimicrobial efficacy	* high encapsulation efficiency * high physical stability * high antibacterial activity against <i>P. acnes</i> and <i>S. aureus</i> .	[44]
NLCs-based gel	Acitretin	* in vitro studies in human cadaver skin * clinical studies to treat psoriasis	* higher deposition of acitretin was found in human cadaver skin * an improvement of clinical responses and reduction of local side effects.	[27]
SLNs	Erythromycin	* as a second-line topical treatment for acne	* exhibited a biphasic pattern with the burst release at the initial stage and sustained release subsequently which could be therapeutically desired.	[45]

and intravenous routes to male rats. It seems that pulmonary delivery of SLNs may improve patients' compliance due to reduction of drug side effects in kidneys and prolongation of drug dosing intervals due to the sustained drug release property of SLNs [41]. As reported by Videira et al. (2002) a significant uptake of the radio-labeled SLNs was shown in the lymphatics after inhalation and a high rate of distribution was seen in lymph nodes. Consequently, the use of amikacin-SLN seems promising for enhanced effects of this drug in CF as inhaled nanoparticles which can reduce the dose frequency and improve the pharmacologic index of the drug. Furthermore, Bargoni et al. (2001)

showed that tobramycin-SLN were concentrated in lungs and concluded that this increased concentration might help treating pulmonary infections [42].

LNPs as an orally delivery system

Bioavailability of oral drugs are always limited by their poor solubility and dissolution rate, degradation in the GIT, the trans-membrane absorption barrier and the efflux mediated by transporters such as P-gp, Figure 6 [15, 46]. The development of composite formulation methods helps to improve the BA of oral drugs. Normally, the presence of lipids in the GIT induces secretion of gastric lipases, pancreatic

lipases and co-lipases. In addition, the secretion of biliary lipids, bile salts and cholesterol are stimulated, yielding the formation of mixed micelles, which associate to solubilized drugs. Lipid-based formulations can be applied to influence the absorption of pharmaceuticals via various mechanisms, such as modifying the release of active ingredients, improving their BA, stimulating the lymphatic drug transport, interacting with enterocyte-based transport processes and reducing unwanted drug side effects. In addition, LNPs can protect encapsulated drugs against enzymatic degradation in GIT [47, 48].

The following factors can also enhance the absorption of drugs: the reduction in particle size resulted in significant increase in the surface area of the particles, which makes a sufficient and steady drug absorption in GIT; bioadhesion of LNPs to the gut wall due to the increased surface area seems to prolong the residence time of LNPs and enhance their close contact. The oral BA of retinoic acid was increased by 2.16 folds when the particle size of SLNs decreased from 328 nm to 89 nm. In addition, digestion of triglycerides by lipase produces surface-active mono- and diacylglycerols, which in turn induce secretion of endogenous bile salts, lead to facilitate drug absorption. Furthermore, LNPs can enhance lymphatic delivery of drugs contributing to the overall BA. The uptake by M-cells and lymphatic transport of intact LNPs plays an important role in the GIT absorption profiles [15]

The absorption of tobramycin by intestinal cells is poor because of P-gp and an ATP-dependent drug efflux pump. In contrast, tobramycin-SLN can significantly suppress the P-gp efflux pump as they penetrate the intestinal linings through endocytosis rather than passive diffusion [1, 4]. The AUC value of praziquantel-SLN after oral administration in rats was 4.1-fold higher than that obtained with a praziquantel tablet [47]. In another study, praziquantel-SLN increased drug BA by 14.9-fold and prolonged its systemic circulation. An initial burst release was observed in drug release study followed by a sustained release of the SLNs [24].

There are also other evidence for improved drug absorption by using SLNs. Ofloxacin-SLN improved the dissolution rate leading to a shorter Tmax and higher Cmax of ofloxacin. In addition, SLN may increase drug residence time in GIT because of more adhesion to the GIT wall or entrance to the intervillous spaces owing to their small particle size [48]. A recent study aimed to improve the oral BA of curcumin by incorporating curcumin in SLNs. Average particle size and total drug content of the SLNs were 134.6 nm and 92%, respectively. SLN formulation prolonged in vitro drug release and improved the oral bioavailability of curcumin, Table 7 [24].

Lipid nanoparticles for the ocular delivery

Ocular drug delivery remains challenging because of the anatomy, physiology and biochemistry of the eye, which render this organ impervious to foreign substances. Challenges for the ocular delivery of a drug are due to different characteristics of the layers of the cornea, sclera, retina, choroid as well as conjunctiva blood flow, lymphatic clearance and tear [26, 49]. Basically, ocular infections are treated by using topical application of antibiotics in the form of eye drops. About 90% of the dose applied topically through such solutions is lost due to precorneal losses (lacrimation and drainage) which lead to poor aqueous availability, so frequent dosing are required to achieve an adequate drug level and therapeutic effect [49].

An ocular delivery system should provide extended contact time and increased penetration of drug from tear phase to eye. Lipophilic drugs are permeable to cornea but formulations of these lipophilic drugs are problematic. Colloidal dosage forms provide the ability to overcome blood-ocular barriers, and efflux-related issues associated with the parent drug. Tobramycin loaded as an ion pair with hexadecyl phosphate in SLNs at a concentration of 0.3% was administered in rabbit eye and aqueous humor concentration of tobramycin analyzed up to 6 h, showing better results than solution of the same concentration of tobramycin. SLNs have the advantage of high viscosity to increase retention time, controlled release kinetics and corneal permeability [26].

SLN formulations are also promising means for prolonged ciprofloxacin release, particularly in ocular infections via local delivery [4]. Pavankumarreddy et al. (2014) used levofloxacin loaded SLNs to evaluate its antimicrobial activity against *S. aureus*. The developed formulations were stable, non-irritant, and suitable for sustained release with better antibacterial actions [49].

LNPs for increasing drug uptake at the blood-brain barrier (BBB)

The delivery of drugs to the brain is still a great challenge for treating brain related diseases, because hydrophilic drugs cannot cross the BBB. The BBB comprises cerebrovascular endothelial cells, which are very tightly connected to each other and supported by glial cells.

One approach to overcome the problem of the impermeability of the BBB was to enhance the fluidity of brain blood vessel membranes by using drug carriers [50]. It was used for treatment of the second stage of human African trypanosomiasis characterized by the presence of parasites (*T. brucei gambiense* and *T. rhodesiense*) in the central nervous system.

Table 7.
Applications and advantages of some solid lipid nanoparticles (SLNs) as oral drug delivery systems.

Formulation	Drug	Application	Advantage	Ref.
SLNs	Tobramycin	* to use orally against <i>P. aeruginosa</i> infections in the GI tract of CF patients.	* penetrate the intestinal linings through endocytosis rather than passive diffusion. * release tobramycin payloads inside the cells.	[1]
SLNs- Fatty acid	Enrofloxacin	* to improve oral BA.	* increased the BA. * extended the mean residence time of enrofloxacin by several-fold.	[48]
SLNs	Vinpocetine	* to improve oral BA.	* increased dissolution * increased oral BA by 322% * oral BA was 4.1-fold higher than that of praziquantel tablet.	[15]
SLNs	Praziquantel	* improve oral BA in rats.	* increased oral BA by 322%. * mean residence time of the drug enhanced about a two-folds.	[47]
SLNs	Praziquantel	* to improve oral BA and prolong drug systemic circulation	* increased drug BA in mice by 14.9-fold. * the mean residence times of the drug were extended from 7.6 to 95.9 h.	[24]
SLNs	Oflloxacin	* to improve drug dissolution rate and its level in GIT fluids.	* shorter Tmax and higher Cmax for drug * increased its residence time in the GI tract.	[48]
SLNs	Curcumin	* to improve drug PK parameters following oral administration.	* prolonged in vitro drug release (up to 7 days) mainly by diffusion mechanism. * improved oral BA.	[24]

CF: cystic fibrosis; BA: bioavailability; PK: pharmacokinetic

Nowadays, clinical therapy of trypanosomiasis shows problems of drug bioavailability and toxicity as well as drug resistance. No drug can be given orally, all drugs have to be administered intravenous. Up to now no successful treatment has been found and diamidines (e.g. diminazene, pentamidine) do not cross the BBB due to their polarity [50].

As shown in table 3, to overcome the low drug loading capacity of SLNs (especially for hydrophilic drugs), lipid-drug conjugate nanoparticles (LDC-NP) were developed by using polysorbate 80 as stabilizer and surface modifier. They possess a drug loading capacity of up to 33% of diminazene [26, 50]. LDC-Diminazene nanoparticles studied on the brain of trypanosomiasis-infected mice provided increasing uptake via the BBB and needed a lower dose with re-

duced side effects [50, 76].

Applications with regard to pathogenic agent

LNPs as antitubercular drug delivery system

Tuberculosis (TB) results in more than eight million new cases and two million deaths annually. Although potentially curative treatments are available, it remains the principal cause of preventable deaths in the world today [51]. LNPs-antimicrobial drug delivery system can be more useful for the treatment of TB by decreasing the dosing frequency and improving the patient compliance [31]. LNPs facilitate the delivery of antitubercular drugs to lungs and to the lymphatic systems. They can provide a sustained release

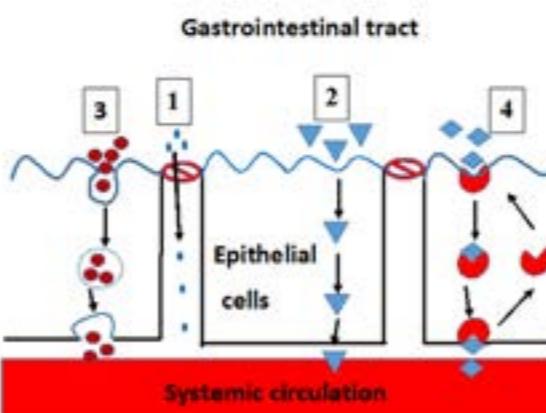


Figure 6.

A schematic representation of drug absorption pathways 1) Paracellular transport and intercellular transport of drugs or solutes across the epithelial cells of the gastrointestinal tract into the systemic circulation; 2) Transcellular passive diffusion; 3) Transcellular endocytosis; 4) Carrier-mediated transport processes. Redrawn from reference [46].

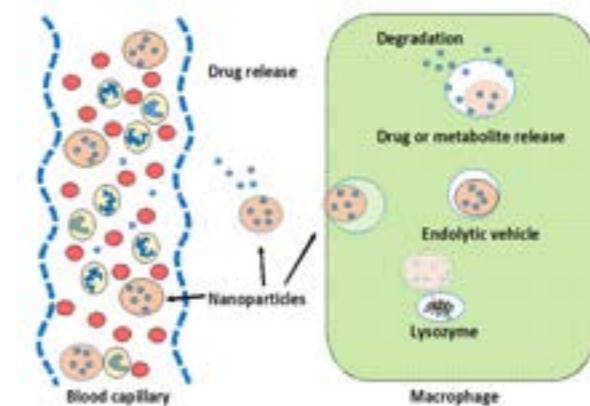


Figure 7.

The proposed mechanism by which nanoparticle-loaded drug can be released in infected macrophage during antitubercular therapy. Redrawn from reference [52].

of the loaded antimicrobial, and effectively eliminate the infections at lymphatic sites [31]. Some studies have revealed the ability of SLNs to bypass P-gp pump, which is one of the mechanisms of multidrug-resistance [10].

Although rifampin (RIF) remains one of the first-line drugs in therapy of TB, many mycobacteria have emerged resistant against it. Two mechanisms are responsible for the drug resistance of mycobacteria: the impermeability of the mycobacterial cell wall and the active multidrug efflux pumps. SLN formulation can manipulate both of them to increase the efficacy. Efforts have been made to achieve formulations of RIF-SLN with the ideal size suitable for intravenous administration, with highest encapsulation efficiency and improved penetration of the bacterial cell wall. It has been suggested that improved penetration is due to their small size and hydrophobic nature of SLNs which is similar to gram negative bacterial cell wall. In addition, SLNs can decrease the frequency of drug administration [10]. TB infection can spread from lungs to the lymphatic system. Therefore, drug delivery to macrophages is of crucial importance in this case. SLNs can aid the delivery of RIF to lungs as well as to the lymphatic system (Figure 7). When the SLNs enter the lungs, alveolar macrophages phagocytose them and transfer drug to the lymphoid tissues [10, 52].

Pandey et al (2003) developed RIF, isoniazid and pyrazinamide-SLN and tested against tuberculosis in experimentally-infected mice [53]. Following a single oral administration to mice, SLNs maintained therapeutic drug concentrations in plasma for 8 days as compared to conventional drugs, which were cleared within 1-2 days. In infected mice, 5 oral doses of

drug-loaded SLNs at every 10th day were sufficient to completely suppress the bacterial load in the lungs/spleen whereas conventional drug required administration of 46 daily oral doses to get the same effect [4]. Streptomycin-SLN can also be used as an effective antitubercular agent by overcoming the limitation of its use to not more than 2-3 months [39].

LNPs as delivery system for antimalarial agents

Malaria is the most common parasitic disease that causes morbidity and mortality in the world. Currently, the treatment of choice for malaria is based on the combination of an artemisinin (ART)-type compound with another drug. This combination with different mechanisms of action can ensure high cure rates and prevent the drug resistance. In fact, these combination therapies may reduce the impact of ART-induced dormancy (or quiescence) of a subpopulation of the ring stage parasites, a mechanism that allows the parasites to survive under the pressure of high doses of ART. Moreover, other reasons including cost, pharmacokinetic mismatch, resistance, cross-resistance and side effects due to the co-administered drug may also lead to treatment failure [54].

The design of an antimalarial drug is affected by the route of administration. For instance, the intravenous route is the preferred route in cerebral malaria, while in acute malaria, the oral route is preferable. The large particle sizes even up to 640 nm are useful to be used as targeted delivery system because erythrocytes are roughly 10 times bigger than them (averaged 6 microns in size). In fact, antimalarial drug carriers in this size range can be used for targeting the plasmodial schizonts and merozoites or their organelles, since the

diameter of these blood forms (generally about 1 μ m) is significantly higher than the particle size [55].

ART, an antimalarial drug, has very poor solubility. ART-NLCs (Nanoject) enhanced its antimalarial activity, when used parenterally. Nanoject showed a significantly higher survival rate (60%) after 31 days as compared to the conventional formulation which showed no survival (100% mortality) [26].

Chloroquine (CQ) was the mainstay of antimalarial agents for years. Resistance to CQ increased in the recent years with the appearance of many resistant strain of *Plasmodium falciparum*. Antimalarial drug combinations have been used to solve this problem. The replacement of CQ with the new successful and expensive artemisinin-based combination therapies has serious economic implications [55]. The extents of accumulation of the drug in vacuoles of chloroquine-sensitive and resistant strains are different which suggests the involvement of drug efflux (P-gp transport) mechanisms [56, 57].

In malaria therapy, chlorpheniramine or promethazine is commonly co-administered with CQ to combat itching, a major adverse effects of CQ. The ability of LNPs to evade P-gp transport has also been exploited in cancer chemotherapy. Therefore, it makes sense to apply a combined approach by using the nanodelivery system and the phenomenon of P-gp inhibition. This is called co-encapsulation, meaning that the two drugs are trapped in a nanoparticle matrix [58].

Co-encapsulation of CQ and chlorpheniramine in a lipid matrix was investigated. Chlorpheniramine has a much lower BA than CQ and so its pharmacokinetics may be more favorably modified by nanodelivery than that of CQ. Clinical evidence for superiority of CQ-chlorpheniramine combination were based on overcoming drug resistance, due to possible effects on P-gp mediated drug efflux. Therefore, SLNs co-encapsulated CQ and chlorpheniramine can be prepared to desired particle size, smaller than the diameter of both human capillary systems and red blood cells and merozoites, by the hot homogenization-dilution method [55].

LNPs for antiviral agents

Aji Alex et al. (2011) enhanced oral bioavailability of lopinavir (Lo), a protease inhibitor used for the treatment of HIV infections by 2.13-fold and 4.91-fold after oral and intraduodenal administration of Lo-SLN, respectively [58]. Stavudine (D4T) is a pyrimidine nucleoside analog and inhibitor for the duplication of HIV, but with short residence time in plasma. Delavirdine (DLV) is a reverse transcriptase inhibitor with high plasma protein binding (98%). Saquinavir (SQV), the first protease inhibitor used against HIV, is a P-glycoprotein (efflux protein) substrate and liable

to be pumped out from the brain parenchyma [59]. SLNs with core of Compritol 888 ATO, tri-palmitin, and cacao butter were formulated for encapsulation of D4T, DLV, and SQV. The dissolution kinetics showed that the cumulative of drugs released from SLNs was in the order of D4T > DLV > SQV. The complex lipid compositions in SLNs act as the drug reservoir and can improve the bioavailability of these drugs [60, 61].

LNPs for loading different antibacterial agents

Ciprofloxacin HCl (CIP), a water-soluble drug, was selected to be formulated in SLNs. Cetylpalmitate used as the lipid core and polysorbate 80 as the surfactant. The antibacterial activity of CIP-SLNs against *S. aureus* and *P. aeruginosa* increased compared to CIP solution while drug-free (blank) SLNs showed no antibacterial effect [62].

Tilmicosin (TLM)-SLNs suspensions with different particle sizes (about 900, 450 and 150 nm) were formulated with different polyvinyl alcohol surfactant levels. Suspensions of smaller-sized particles (150 nm) showed faster initial release, much lower minimum inhibitory concentrations (MIC) and more acute toxicity in mice relative to suspensions of larger-sized particles, due to faster drug release. The TLM released from the TLM-SLN suspensions with the smaller-sized particles had the same MIC and MBC values as that of the standard TLM, demonstrating that the preparation and release processes did not change the antibacterial activity of the TLM [63].

In study by Al-Qushawi et al (2016), using different lipid nanoparticles to load with tilmicosin, the results showed that TLM can be effectively loaded in LNPs formulations especially TLM-LNCs and TLM-NLCs. In microbiological tests, *S. aureus* was about 4 times more sensitive than *E. coli* to TLM-LNPs with MIC ranges of 0.5-1.0 and 2-4 μ g/ml, respectively, and among them, the TLM-LNCs exhibited the best antibacterial activities [64]. The PK study also indicated that the LNPs improved TLM bioavailability and PK parameters especially by LNCs formulation, so these LNPs could be considered as promising delivery systems for TLM and suggest more efficient medications compared to the conventional TLM. The relative bioavailability of TLM-SLN, TLM-NLCs and TLM-LNCs were 2.51, 4.31 and 6.69 times more than conventional TLM, respectively [65].

Other application of LNPs

LNPs for reduction of antimicrobial drug toxicities

SLNs of amikacin were designed for pulmonary delivery to reduce the dose or its dosing intervals lead-

ing to the reduction of its toxicities especially in long-term treatment. Therefore, lower doses of amikacin in SLNs can clear the infection with less adverse effects and more safety. It was suggested that the more potent effect of amikacin-SLN could be due to easier diffusion of LNPs into the cellular membrane of *P. aeruginosa* as the lipid character of the cholesterol used in their formulation is similar to the cell wall of the bacteria. It may be concluded that this carrier could help with better transfer of aminoglycosides into the site of their action and possibly reduce the required dose and consequently decrease the untoward side effects [38].

In addition, the small particle size of the SLNs is a contributing factor in enhancing diffusion of drug into the bacterial cell [38]. The in vitro analyses of the cytotoxicity of different tilmicosin-SLN suspensions showed that none of them altered BHK-21 tissue cell proliferation at concentrations up to 32 μ g/ml. At higher concentrations (64-512 μ g/ml of tilmicosin), all suspensions showed similar concentration-dependent cytotoxic activity. This could be due to the low inherent cytotoxicity of native tilmicosin since the main differences among the suspensions were found in their drug release speed [63].

LNPs as delivery system for antimicrobial agents from herbal extracts

Nowadays, herbal remedies are more appealing in the treatment of different types of diseases, including bacterial and fungal infections. There are many medicinal plant extracts which are used for the treatment of microbial infections due to the presence of certain active chemical constituents like tannins, which are effectively fight against wide range of microbes [66]. Herbal remedies are considered as the safest therapeutic agents due to less frequent side effects such as local irritation, contact dermatitis, photosensitivity, itching and redness of the skin [67].

Modern pharmacological research has revealed that essential oils are the primary effective components in frankincense and myrrh oil (FMO) which exhibits a broad spectrum of antimicrobial activities. The poorly water-soluble drug FMO was efficiently encapsulated into SLNs. The evaporation release study of the formulation showed that SLN incorporation could reduce the evaporation loss of FMO components to a desirable degree. Hence, the prepared SLNs could be used as drug carriers for hydrophobic oil drugs extracted from traditional Chinese medicines [68].

The essential oil extracts of *N. sativa* was also shown to have antimicrobial effects. It was shown that it was possible to formulate *N. sativa* with good properties with SLNs by using mixed lipids to lower the SLNs crystallinity and overcome the problem of drug expulsion encountered with use of high purity lipids

in the formulation of SLNs and NLCs [69].

Lacatusu et al. (2012) found that NLCs might have complementary effects with regard to antimicrobial activity [66]. Carotene-NLCs were found to be effective against resistant *E. coli* bacteria. This antimicrobial activity was mainly correlated with the natural oil used and β -carotene concentration. In a recent study to evaluate the antimicrobial activity of methanolic extract of *Abutilon indicum* (MEAI)-SLNs against pathogens that can cause diabetic foot and urinary tract infection, it was shown that MEAI-SLN was effective against these microorganisms due to the vicinity of tannins [67].

Acne is caused by *Propionibacterium acne* (*P. acne*) microorganisms, which live in deep layers of skin within follicles and pores. *P. acne* bacteria use sebum, cellular debris and metabolic by-products as their primary nutrient sources. Elevated production of sebum by hyperactive sebaceous glands or blockage of the follicle can facilitate *P. acne* bacteria to grow [70]. Treatment of acne with antimicrobial agents requires a long-term therapy, which sometimes results in failure. There are concerns that the development of resistance by *P. acnes* may be associated with the development of resistance by other organisms, such as *S. aureus* and *S. pneumoniae*. Thus, alternative approaches for the antimicrobial treatment of acne are needed [45]. Neem oil is used in the treatment of acne. It contains strong antibacterial agents such as Margolone and Mahmoodin which are very similar to the ingredients found in common anti-acne products. Neem oil-SLN formulation was applied for the treatment of acne by using different concentrations of lecithin. Neem oil-SLN with more lecithin content exhibited sustained effect and produced more antibacterial action against *P. Acne* [70].

LNPs for delivery of microorganism-derived sources of antimicrobial agents

Nisin, a polypeptide produced by *Lactococcus lactis* strains and belongs to the lantibiotic family. Nisin as a natural antimicrobial agent is active against a wide variety of gram-positive bacteria, and is used as a preservative in heat processed and low pH foods. The mode of action of nisin on vegetative cells involves the formation of pores in the cytoplasmic membrane leading to the efflux of cytoplasmic components. However, nisin has limited stability and it is rapidly exhausted from the foods due to its interactions with the food components, such as proteins and lipids, inactivation by enzymatic degradation, or uneven distribution of nisin molecules within the food matrix. Slow release nisin-SLN protects its effects in food environment and prolongs its biological activity. Nisin was released from the SLNs gradually up to 25 days. The antibac-

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rial activity of nisin-SLN against *Listeria monocytogenes* and *Lactobacillus plantarum* was evident for up to 20 and 15 days, respectively, compared to only one and three days, respectively, for free nisin [71].

LNP_s for anti-biofilm agents

Biofilm is a adhesive community of bacterial cells enclosed by a self-secreted matrix of extracellular polymeric substances. Biofilm is the predominant mode of growth of *P. aeruginosa* bacteria as it renders them less susceptible (10-1000 fold) to antibiotics compared to the planktonic forms [72]. In this regard, lipid-polymer hybrid nanoparticles (LPNs), where antibiotic-loaded polymeric nanoparticle core is coated with lipid layers, represent a promising anti-biofilm formulation as the hybrid nanoparticles possess physical robustness afforded by the polymer matrix. Moreover, owing to their robustness, LPNs can withstand the physical transformation from their aqueous suspension state into the pharmaceutical solid dosage form, hence enabling their delivery by dry powder inhaler, which is widely regarded as much more effective than nebulization [73].

Levofloxacin (LEV), a fluoroquinolone antibiotic has been found to be highly effective against *P. aeruginosa* biofilm cells. LEV-LPNs which are composed of biodegradable and biocompatible poly (lactic-co-glycolic acid) (PLGA) and phosphatidylcholine, in which they were employed as the polymer and lipid models, respectively. They have been found to exhibit higher antibacterial efficacy against *P. aeruginosa* biofilm cells than their non-hybrid PLGA nanoparticle counterparts. The higher antibacterial efficacy, however, is not observed against planktonic cells that are steadily shed from the biofilm matrix, which consequently rules out lipid-induced enhancement of the antibiotic activity as the factor responsible for the high anti-biofilm efficacy of LPNs. Increased biofilm cell detachment into the planktonic state might be induced by biofilm-adsorbed nanoparticles, but it seems not the cause for the higher biofilm eradication rate either. Furthermore, the impact of antibiotic exposure levels on the biofilm eradication rate has been found to be minimal, hence ruling out the more sustained antibiotic release rate in the LPNs as the factor contributing to the higher anti-biofilm efficacy. Hence, it is thought that the presence of lipid may have enhanced the antibiotic diffusion into the biofilm matrix resulting in more effective biofilm cell eradications [6].

LNP_s with biopolymer

Tretinoin (TRE) is an analog of vitamin A used in the topical treatment of various skin diseases. Its use is highly restricted by its skin irritation and chemical instability. Chitosan is a biopolymer, which has been

extensively used, such as bio-adhesion, its antibacterial activities interesting for treatment of skin diseases including bacterial proliferation such as acne and can be used in combination with SLNs. TRE-SLN showed no in-vitro antibacterial activity against the bacteria tested (*P. acnes* and *Staphylococcus aureus*) but the SLNs-chitosan-TRE inhibited the activity of these bacteria at low concentrations. The SLNs-chitosan-TRE showed an antibacterial activity against bacteria involved in the acne, which can increase the therapeutic efficacy of TRE in the topical treatment of this disease [44].

Onychomycosis is a fungal infection that is responsible for nail diseases. This infection is caused by mainly by *Trichophyton rubrum*. Human nail, composed of more than 80 layers of dead cells, thus, it is hard to induce therapeutic drug concentration of terbinafine in the skin and nail. It has low fungicidal concentrations. However, 40% of the oral dose loses with first-pass metabolism. SLNs were formulated with a chitosan based gel to obtain a topical dosage form with a semisolid consistency. This hydrogel formulation renders an occlusive film with special affinity for the stratum corneum. Bio-adhesive properties and antimicrobial activities of chitosan participation this effect. The network of gel formulation stops the polymorphic SLN transitions, thus enhance the stability of SLNs, the functionality of excipients, drug loading, and decrease the quantity of lipid content and reduce the cost of the formulation [28].

Conclusion

For more than a half century antimicrobial have been saving a great number of lives due to diverse infectious diseases. Many antimicrobial drugs are suffering from a range of limitations which makes therapeutic challenges such as their low water-solubility, narrow spectrum of activity, rapid degradation and clearance, low safety and tolerability. Insufficient delivery of the drugs has also been one of the major limitations of conventional antimicrobial therapy, as well as the development of bacterial resistance, and chronic lung biofilm infection. Their antimicrobial activities against intracellular microbes are also severely limited by poor membrane transport ability. Because of their very small size, nanoparticles (NPs) have much greater biological availability, and are more likely to enter the cells, tissues and organs in comparison to larger particles. Rapid advances in the nanoparticle production with uniform size, shape and composition have caused a revolution in the pharmaceutical sciences and industry. These properties can be used to overcome some of the limitations of conventional antimicrobial agents. The NPs drug delivery systems can improve the quality of antimicrobial treatment by

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decreasing side effects, reducing the frequency of drug administration via prolongation of drug residence time, controllable uniform distribution in the target tissue, improved solubility, sustained and controlled release, enhanced cellular internalization and improving pharmacokinetic parameters and drug safety. Extensive studies have demonstrated that lipid nanoparticles (LNPs) such as solid lipid nanoparticles (SLN), nanostructured lipid carriers (NLC), lipid-drug conjugates (LDC), Lipid-core nanocapsules (LNCs) and lipid-polymer nanoparticles (LPNs) are able to overcome these issues and facilitate antimicrobial delivery to infection sites. While most of these nanoparticle-based antimicrobial drug delivery systems are currently in preclinical development, some have been approved for clinical use. With the ongoing efforts in this field, there is no doubt that nanoparticle-based drug delivery systems will continue to improve treatment of bacterial infections, especially in life-threatening diseases such as staphylococcal infections and tuberculosis.

Acknowledgment

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Author Contributions

Wrote the first draft: A.A, Changed the structure of the first draft, thoroughly revised and submitted: A.R.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

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